DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 392 SO 017 448

AUTHOR Taniuchi, Lois
TITLE Classroom Discipline and Management in Japanese Elementary School Classrooms.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Oct 85
CONTRACT NIE-P-85-3025
NOTE 49p.; For other studies in this series on education in Japan, see SO 017 338 and SO 017 443-460.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Problems; Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; *Comparative Education; Cross Cultural Studies; *Discipline; *Discipline Policy; *Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; Management Systems; Sanctions
IDENTIFIERS *Japan; *United States; United States Study of Education in Japan

ABSTRACT

The major early influences and actual training methods by which classroom management routines and behavioral control strategies are established in the first grade of Japanese elementary schools are examined in the first of three sections of this study. Drawing on relevant literature and preliminary results of an 18-month ethnographic study of Japanese preschools and first grade classrooms, this paper traces the roots of the inculcation of classroom discipline, the management strategies of behavior control, and the early socialization of attitudes toward learning activities. The second section discusses the nature of preschools and day care centers as an environment for the acquisition of basic classroom routines and attitudes. The third section examines the methods used by Japanese first grade teachers during the first weeks of school to train efficient and orderly classroom routines and to establish expectations and sanctions for appropriate classroom behavior. The paper concludes by considering the continuity of these routines and disciplinary approaches over the remainder of the child's public school career and offers some observations on the relevance of the Japanese approach to the United States system. (RSL)

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CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT IN JAPANESE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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SP017458

Paper prepared for United States Study of Education in Japan, National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., October 1985.

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The work on which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Contract No. NIE-P-85-3025 of the National Institute of Education. It does not, however, reflect the views of that agency.

INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades Japan has gained an international reputation for outstanding scholastic performance. Comparative standing on international tests of mathematics and science achievement show that as early as 1964 Japan was among the top three nations in the world in mathematics achievement in secondary schools (Husen, 1967). Six years later, an international comparison of science achievement in 19 countries found that Japanese 10 and 14 year olds consistently ranked first or second place in scientific information as well as understanding, application, and higher processes (Comber & Keeves, 1973). These results as well as a remarkably high level of literacy and public sophistication in information processing skills led observers as early as the middle 1970's to characterize the Japanese educational system as probably the most effective in the world (Glazer, 1976) and as the basis of the nation's meteoric rise to economic success (Reischauer, 1977).

The past several years have witnessed a new upsurge of American interest in Japanese education. A recent follow-up of the earlier studies of mathematics and science achievement (Stigler et al, 1982) found that not only do Japanese secondary students still considerably outperform their American counterparts, but that this discrepancy is evident in reading as well as mathematics from the first grade onward.

These findings have led American scholars and educators to more closely examine Japanese educational policy, curriculum, and classroom environment in search of a better understanding of the nature of Japanese success and new ideas to solve the problems of American public schools.

This closer look at Japanese classrooms has prompted the realization that Japanese students' high academic achievement is based not only on an excellent and rigorous formal curriculum (Easley, 1983), but on highly motivated, well-disciplined, and cooperative student attitudes (Cummings, 1980; Rohlen, 1983). Despite the handicaps of almost 50% more students per class[1] and the absence of auxiliary teaching personnel a recent study of Japanese classroom behavior (Stevenson, 1985) shows that Japanese elementary school classrooms are much more orderly and more easily managed than are American ones. Less incidence of student inattention and misbehavior and the greater ease with which transitions between activities are accomplished allows Japanese children to spend approximately 25% more time engaged in academic activities for every hour that they are at school (Stevenson, Stigler & Lee, 1984). In addition, the high level of internalization of school standards and values means that this

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[1]Japanese public elementary school classes average 35 or 36 students. Up to 44 students may be assigned to a single class before Mombusho guidelines recommend the formation of two classes.

orderliness and compliance is achieved without authoritarian enforcement of rules by the principal and teachers (Rohlen, 1983; Cumming, 1980).

To date, there has been very little information available concerning how this high level of discipline and student engagement is developed. Although a few studies have described disciplinary techniques in Japanese preschools (Lewis, 1984; Tobin, 1985) and several authors have attested to the generally high level of classroom discipline and morale in Japanese public schools (Rohlen, 1983; Stevenson, 1985; Cummings, 1980), there has been no systematic consideration of the means by which these behaviors are inculcated, and the socialization process by which this high level of student internalization of standards is achieved. This paper will address these issues by describing the major early influences and actual training methods by which classroom management routines and behavioral control strategies are established in the first grade of Japanese elementary schools.

Drawing on relevant literature and preliminary results of an eighteen-month ethnographic study of Japanese preschools and first grade classrooms, the paper will also trace the roots of the inculcation of classroom discipline and management strategies back to maternal strategies of behavior control and the early socialization of attitudes toward learning activities. The second section of the paper will discuss the nature of preschools

and daycare centers as environments for the acquisition of basic classroom routines and attitudes. Next, methods used by Japanese first grade teachers during the first weeks of school to train efficient and orderly classroom routines and establish expectations and sanctions for appropriate classroom behavior will be described. In conclusion, the paper will consider the continuity of these routines and disciplinary approaches over the remainder of the child's public school career and offer some observations on the relevance of the Japanese approach to the American system.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Data reported in this paper were collected during 18 months of ethnographic research in Japanese preschools and first-grade classrooms[2]. Elementary school observations foucused on two representative public schools; one in Tokyo, and one in a provincial city of 400,000 people. In each school, one first-grade classroom was observed intensively during the first three weeks of the school year with briefer, comparative observations in another classroom and periodic follow-up throughout the school year. Two other first-grade classes in different schools were observed intensively for a week during the second month of the

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[2]Field research was generously supported by a Japan Foundation Fellowship and a Sinclair Kennedy Travelling Fellowship from Harvard University.

school year, and retrospective accounts of the beginning of the school year were also obtained from principals and first-grade teachers in five other schools. Altogether, first-grade classrooms in nine different schools representing a broad range of socioeconomic classes and different parts of the country were studied.

Three major types of data were collected. Ethnographic observations of school and classroom activities were carried out using a tape recorder and handwritten field notes. Teachers and principals were interviewed extensively concerning their beliefs and goals regarding classroom discipline and routines. At the end of each day of observation, incidents of teacher sanctions of misbehavior were reviewed to learn teachers' attitudes and reasons for using various disciplinary approaches. In addition, professional magazines and books for teachers were reviewed to learn their recommendations for establishing classroom routines and discipline, along with materials prepared by individual schools for use by parents and teachers.

Research in preschools followed the same procedures of sampling and data collection. Ethnographic observations focused on the newly accepted three-year-old class in two private preschools, one in Tokyo, and one in the above-described provincial city. During the first three weeks of the school year the target class was observed intensively with periodic follow-ups throughout the year. Classes in three other preschools were also

observed later in the school year. Ethnographic data were collected in a manner similar to that used in the elementary schools, using classroom observations, teacher and principal interviews, and review of professional literature and school handouts. All data in both preschools and elementary schools were collected by the principal researcher, who is fluent in the Japanese language.

FAMILY DISCIPLINE AND PREPARATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

American folk theories of child rearing generally hold that well socialized children learn proper behavior and etiquette at home which is then displayed as a matter of habit in school and other social situations. In contrast, Japanese believe that the behavior which is appropriate in public situations such as schools is fundamentally different than that which is natural in private situations such as the home, and therefore the family is not considered to be the primary socializer of school-appropriate behavior. For example, a mother who trained her preschool child to eat his daily afternoon snack using the same table manners which will be expected of him at the school lunch table would likely be criticized by her friends and perhaps even the child's eventual preschool teacher as overly strict in denying the relaxed, indulgent permissiveness that a warm, accepting family should properly provide (Taniuchi, 1984).

Particularly during the first seven years of life, Japanese mothers are highly indulgent of their children, satisfying their

demands whenever possible (Benedict, 1946; Lebra, 1976). When a child's behavior must be corrected, mothers use a low-key non-authoritarian approach, explaining patiently that such activities are inappropriate and hoping to win the child over to her point of view. If the child does not willingly respond to her suggestions, mothers rarely force the issue, preferring to allow the child to do as he will[3], trying her explanations and persuasion again when the child is in a more cooperative mood (Conroy, 1980; Lanham, 1966; E. Vogel, 1983; S. Vogel, 1978). When it is not possible for the mother to fulfill the child's desires, full-scale tantrums in which the child physically attacks and verbally abuses the mother are not uncommon (Benedict, 1946). Mothers usually endure this pummeling and kicking patiently and in good humor without making any attempts to force the child to desist. From an American point of view, Japanese mothers are remarkably free of ego-based assertions of authority over their children, even responding to their criticisms of her own behavior with ready apologies (Lanham, 1966).

Through these methods, Japanese mothers attempt to establish a very close interdependent emotional relationship with their children in which the mother is an endlessly cooperative and

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[3]Throughout this paper, for ease of expression, the pronoun "he" will be used to refer to both male and female children, and "she" to refer to both male and female preschool and elementary school teachers.

sympathetic ally against the harsh outside world. Through patient explanation and the subtle pscyhological techniques of flattery, warnings of others' unsympathetic ridicule, and intimations of possible withdrawal of her uncritical love, mothers manage to elicit their children's willing cooperation with their expectations and goals in a manner which avoids direct confrontation (Lebra, 1976; E. Vogel, 1963). This approach is termed wakaraseru or "getting the child to understand" what is expected of him. The goal is developing a child who is sunao or naturally cooperative and genuinely enthusiastic about fulfilling parental expectations. A sunao personality is believed to be developed through creating a positive primary relationship with the mother and not arousing the child's resistance or excessive independence through appearing to oppose or embarrass the child (Kumagai, 1981).

Close observation of three and four-year-old children when they enter preschool and interviews with their mothers reveal that the transition from this indulgent child-centered home setting to the highly structured group-oriented environment of the preschool is not easy (Taniuchi, 1984).[4] Many children have

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[4]Virtually all Japanese children attend either preschool (yōchien) or daycare (hoikuen). Although exact statistics aggregating attendance at both types of institutions are unavailable, estimates (Taniuchi, 1982) suggest that at least 95% of Japanese children attend at least one year of preschool or daycare and 85% attend at least two years.

never experienced a daily schedule in which activities such as playtimes or mealtimes were not scheduled according to their convenience and lack basic self-sufficiency skills such as dressing and toileting alone. In addition, tears and an adamant refusal have usually been sufficient in at least temporarily obtaining their desires.

It is quite a shock for these children to suddenly enter the preschool environment where they must function in step with 25 or 30 other children and must perform clothes-changing, eating, and various classroom routines to a highly ritualized, exacting standard. Extreme passiveness, tantrums, and refusals to attend preschool are common during the first months until the children adjust to the new expectations and routine.

Japanese preschool teachers and parents are typically undisturbed by evidence of this great disparity between home and school expectations. The mother's role is to be the child's closest and most intimate companion and a gentle force for gradual molding of the child's character, rather than an agent of firm discipline. Her role is to foster and satisfy amae, or the child's secure assumption that his egoistic desires will be unhesitatingly and lovingly attended to without the cold, unfriendly expectation that he must be on special good behavior.

This indulgent sweetness is the proper nature of the uchi or home (Doi, 1973), and training in the subjugation of egoistic behavior and the inculcation of good manners and social graces is

learned in the soto or public sphere. It is the dynamic balance between the two which forms the underpinnings of the Japanese personality and creates the often described dramatic discrepancies between public and private behavior. As we shall see in the next sections, the Japanese child's transition from life at home to life at school in the midst of a large group is the first arena in which this training for soto-type behavior takes place.

Although Japanese parents do not provide home preparation in the social behavior which will be required of their children at school, they do give their preschool-aged children considerable experience in academically-related skills. Through play, mothers teach basic reading and counting skills, (Lebra 1976; Sakamoto, 1975; E. Vogel, 1983), and provide considerable experience with arts and crafts such as drawing or making simple toys with paper, paste, and scissors. Surprisingly complex origami projects are also a favorite and the result of this type of quiet cognitively-oriented play is that most children develop good concentration (Lanham, 1966; Shigaki, 1983) and a quiet assurance and enjoyment of fine-motor tasks involving paper, crayons, and quiet desk activity. Indeed, by the time children enter first grade, most of them can read and write the hiragana alphabet, count to 100 and do simple arithmetic combinations under 10 (Taniuchi, 1985). These skills are rarely taught in preschools or daycare centers but are largely acquired at home.

Interestingly, however, Japanese public school officials are displeased at the high level of academic preparation children receive at home. Principals and Ministry of Education officials are unanimous in requesting mothers not to teach their preschool children anything more than how to read and write their own name and count as far as 10. In interviews, they typically cite academic over preparation as one of the most challenging problems which first grade teachers face. They explain that differences in the amount of home preparation that students receive creates troublesome ability differences for first-grade teachers who must lead 40 children all together through the same curriculum[5]. Because the first grade curriculum teaches all of these skills from the beginning assuming no relevant prior training, children who already know the material are said to develop bad habits of inattention and a know-it-all attitude.

Teachers, however, are more divided on this issue. Although many agree that too much home preparation is undesirable, some confess privately that the rate of presentation of new material in the first grade curriculum is so rapid that if children enter school really unable to do more than read and write their own name and count to ten, they will probably be unable to keep up

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[5]Ability grouping is not practiced in Japanese elementary schools and the subject is virtually taboo due to the strong negative stand of the Japanese teacher's union (Cummings, 1980).

the rate at which the course of study requires the first-grade curriculum to be presented. They suggest that the principals' and officials' position may be an example of a honne (real situation) vs. tatemae (official prouncement) discrepancy in which it is necessary to maintain the fiction that the schools provide children with all the training necessary for academic success. In addition, open encouragement of mothers to teach reading and number skills during the preschool years might encourage extension of the academic pressure associated with "examination hell" into the preschool years.

Interviews with preschool mothers, however, showed that with the exception of a very small percentage of urban upper-middle class mothers who were attempting to enroll their children in elite private elementary schools, the vast majority of Japanese mothers do not have strong competitive and academically oriented reasons for giving their child a basic background in reading and number skills. Indeed, these skills are rarely formally taught, but usually acquired largely through play and such activities as karuta,[6] working with activity books and children's magazines, or counting familiar objects in their environment. These activities

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[6]Karuta is a traditional children's game, in which one chooses the single card from a scattered assortment on the floor which corresponds to the first letter of a short poem which is read aloud. Usually played with several children, the game is fast-paced and requires good attention and scanning skills. It is also played on a more sophisticated level by adults during the New Year holidays.

are seen as enjoyable, age-appropriate experiences, and are an unselfconscious part of middle class childrearing, much as are bedtime stories in American middle-class homes.

Rather than training children in academic subjects, principals and Ministry officials harken back to a long Confucian educational tradition in requesting parents to give their children strict physical and moral training during the preschool years. In contrast to the age-old tradition of indulgent, child-oriented socialization methods so common even today (Hara & Wagatsuma, 1974), gentleman scholars and school authorities since the Edo period have prescribed strict moral and physical training in the home in a largely futile attempt to remedy the laxity they believe to stem from excessive maternal indulgence (Kojima, 1985; Yamazumi and Nakae, 1976). This training focuses on strict observance of greetings, etiquette such as polite respect for elders, training in regularity of habits and bodily functions, and development of the ability to carry out assigned tasks and persevere in the face of adversity (Kojima, 1985).

On the level of <u>tatemae</u> (official prouncement), Japanese elementary schools take quite seriously this role of encouraging properly strict childrearing practices among their students' families. This usually takes the form of mimeographed letters and pamphlets and occasional speeches by the principal to the PTA about the importance of establishing carefully regulated patterns of daily life and proper moral habits in the homes. In fact, interviews showed that while parents respect the appropriateness

of these generally idealistic and rather rigid recommendations on a theoretical level, they are undisturbed by the discrepancies between these recommendations and their own more practically-oriented and indulgent methods of childrearing. Without pondering the contradictions between the two childrearing traditions, Japanese parents seem to make room for both in their ethnotheories of childrearing. Thus we witness the apparent contradiction of a mother who nods gravely through the principal's speech to the local PTA on the importance of training children to eat appreciatively what is set before them and to do away with any choosiness and food dislikes and then hurries home to prepare the child's favorite foods for dinner, spending extra time cutting and shaping the food to resemble animals or flowers, to tempt the child's jaded appetite.

PRESCHOOL BEHAVIOR CONTROL AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

For three and four-year old Japanese children, entering preschool requires adapting to the expectations of a radically different environment. In contrast to American ideas about the most salient features of early education, Japanese do not refer to preschool and elementary school as "learning environments", but as "shudan seikatu", or "life in a group." Understanding the cultural definition of shudan seikatsu from the point of view of indigenous Japanese psychology is a major key to understanding Japanese teachers' methods of behavior control and classroom management. This first introduction to life in a group plants

the seeds of habits of communal organization and attitudes toward authority which will remain with the child not only for the duration of his school career, but throughout the rest of his later life.

The concept of shudan seikatu is deceptively complex. Literally translated, it can be rendered "group living" (shudan = group or collective; seikatsu = living or daily life). However, these two simple words connote a complicated set of cultural expectations concerning the appropriate interrelationship of the individual and the group. Through gradually assuming the responsibilities of shudan seikatsu and developing the appropriate attitudes toward group participation, the egocentric attitudes and habits developed in the process of early family socialization are gradually modified in the direction of socially appropriate behavior. Throughout the often-difficult process of helping the child learn to bring his individual desires and actions into conformity with those of the group, the teacher does not adopt the role of authority figure. Rather than arousing the child's resistance through one-on-one confrontation, she allows the expectations and demands of the group to be the means by which the child's ego is tamed.

Although Japanese rarely explicitly state the expectations and attitudes which constitute shudan seikatsu, a rough outline of the concept can be constructed from the material gained from in-depth interviews with teachers and parents. Shudan seikatsu may be summarized as involving the following four assumptions:

1) Whenever possible, all activities should be accomplished as a group.

2) Individual differences should be minimized.

3) All members should be in agreement about the group's goals and activities.

4) Individuals should identify with and genuinely enjoy group participation.

Virtually all observers of Japanese preschools (Tobin, 1985; Lewis, 1984; Shigaki, 1983; Bedford, 1979) have noted the strong emphasis on group-oriented behavior and described activities and classroom management techniques which are based upon these assumptions. Almost every author comments upon the practices of requiring children to wear identical school uniforms, performing various daily rituals of greeting, eating, leave taking, etc. in unison, and carrying out play and learning activities in a large-group format. Highly structured participation in a large group is not only the norm but the ideal for virtually every aspect of Japanese preschool life.

Tobin (1985) has noted that this group activity is not only believed to be more fun than individual activity, it is considered expressive of humans' joyous potential for comradeship and unity with something larger than the self. Transcripts of preschool teachers' language collected by Taniuchi clearly demonstrate these attitudes in the way in which classroom activities and other students are commonly described. Speeches at the opening ceremony and daily greeting songs frequently couple the adjective <u>tanoshii</u> (enjoyable, fun) with references to both the

preschool itself and its activities. The words "minna to issho ni" (all together) and "naka yoku" (in a friendly manner) are repeated again and again in an enthusiastic and positive manner in the teachers' dialogue throughout the day. Teachers standardly refer to all students, both collectively and singularly as "otomodachi" (friends) irregardless of evidence of personal affiliation.

This strong and unshakably optimistic attiude that group activities are by definition fun is all the more interesting in light of the fact that the demands of the group are also typically used as the scapegoat when a child's indvidual desires or egocentric behavior must be curtailed. Other authors (Tobin, 1985; Lewis, 1983) have noted Japanese teachers reluctance to assume the role of an authority figure in forcing children's compliance to behavioral standards. They have also noted that teachers often delegate responsibility for the correction of children's inappropriate behavior to other members of the peer group (Tobin, 1985; Lewis, 1983; Shigaki, 1983). The more subtle point here, however, is that although teachers are reluctant to assume overt responsibility for ensuring children's compliance, both their conscious and culturally-patterned unconscious structuring of the nature of shudan seikatsu and the way in which they interpret group demands to individual members forms a covert but virtually unassailable authority which is the more powerful because of its indirect nature. These tactics are extremely

effective in both obtaining children's initial compliance, and in promoting later identification with the group's goals.

For example, a child who admantly refuses to end the morning play period and come into the classroom to participate in the lengthy morning ritual of greetings and announcements would not find himself scolded or physically forced to enter the classroom by the teacher. Instead, after numerous reminders and worried warnings that the group will be forced to proceed without him, the teacher will theatrically lead the class inside calling "sayonara" over her shoulder. In the infrequent case that this threat of being abandoned by the class group is ineffective in eliciting cooperation, the teacher will leave the rest of the children to their own devices while she returns to squat at the child's side. Sympathetic and puzzled, she professes to understand that the child wants to continue to play, but wonders if he isn't lonely out here all by himself? All of his otomodachi (friends) are waiting for him inside, and of course they wouldn't think of starting without him, and certainly he won't want to miss the "tanoshii" (fun) activities everyone has planned for the day. Is he feeling well? Everyone is worried about him.

By this time curious classmates left alone in the classroom will come wandering outside again and will be encouraged to call the straggler to come to join the group. In a friendly manner, the teacher will take the child's hand and lead him back inside, often to the accompaniment of welcoming applause. It is a rare

preschooler who can long remain uncooperative in the face of such deft manipulation.

Children who prefer independent activities, or who become balky and uncooperative when expected to fulfill the complex expectations involved in the daily group rituals of greeting, dressing, etc. are approached in a sympathetic, polite, and cheerful manner. Of such a child it is pityingly said that "mada minna to issho ni asobu tanoshisa ga wakaranai" or "he doesn't yet understand the fun of playing with everyone else." It could not be possible that a child would actually rather not participate in group activities. Veteran teachers with twenty years of preschool teaching experience told me they had never met a child who honestly preferred to remain aloof, although they conceded that it took some children more time to realize how fun group life really is. To a Japanese preschool teacher, becoming an accepted, participating member of a group is inevitable.

The genius of this approach lies in its effectiveness. By smilingly appearing to disbelieve the child's refusals to participate and by never providing a clearly defined individual against whom he can rebel, it becomes almost impossible for a child to assert his independence. The result of two or three years spent in such a preschool environment is that even initially independent and willful children gradually and painlessly find themselves absorbed into the group's activities and goals. This well-socialized member of the classroom group will

later respond almost instinctively to a similar but intensified setting of group authority in the elementary school.

Preschool and elementary school teachers have numerous other tactics for eliciting students' cooperation and compliance while maintaining a low profile of authority and exhibiting only indirect control. Lewis (1983) has described the practices of intentionally ignoring minor misbehavior and defusing its correction when it cannot be avoided by the suggestion that children have "forgotten" or "didn't understand" the most obvious rules. Repeated requests to stop even such mildly dangerous behavior as throwing sand or putting foreign objects in the fish tank will rarely be enforced if the child refuses to desist. Sooner or later the child will understand what he should do and until then excessive use of authority is believed to only arouse alienation and resistance. This relaxed attitude resembles previously described maternal control strategies which eschew the use of coercion to accomplish short term disciplinary aims. In the Japanese family, however, there is no close parallel to the socializing effect of the group which inevitably requires the child to modify his desires to conform to an external, unyielding standard.

Two other methods of indirect behavior control are initially established in Japanese preschools and later elaborated in elementary schools. The first is the establishment of clearly defined and well-practiced classroom routines which are triggered

by indirect environmental cues rather than teacher requests. For example, the ending of morning play period and the beginning of clean-up time is typically signaled by the sudden broadcasting throughout the school yard of a sprightly, cheerful, always identical musical recording (in one preschool Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmuzik). The daily routines of changing clothes and stowing personal belongings are accomplished quickly and expertly without the need for teacher correction or leadership. Once these complex ritualized habits have been carefully and painstakingly established early in the school year, children develop a feeling of pride in their class's competence and a strong feeling of responsibility. This type of training develops the expectation that there is a correct and orderly way of doing things and that all children will be expected to perform basic classroom routines in an identical manner. Furthermore, it promotes the internalization of group standards and a "good class" identity which soon becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The inculcation of these habits will be discussed in the context of their much more sophisticated and extensive use in the first-grade classroom.

An additional method of indirect behavior control involves the minute-to-minute calibration of the level of order in the classroom. As other observers have noted (Lewis, 1983; Tobin, 1985) Japanese preschool and elementary schools fluctuate between virtually complete freedom with extremely loud, unrestrained

activity, and complete silence with military-like precision, with an appropriate and clearly defined time for each modality. Usually the beginning and ending of each activity throughout the day is rather formally and tightly structured and children are allowed to relax during the interim. Although classroom noise levels may approach the deafening as 25 to 30 four-year olds run about the small classroom shrieking, climbing on the tabletops and chalksills and pounding vigorously on the piano, teachers remain relaxed and unthreatened by the chaos. Spontaneity and exhuberance in play are positively valued as a sign of healthy, childlike high spirits and children are allowed to set their own pace of activity. Once the play period is over, however, lunch inevitably begins with its routine ritual songs and formalities and the class briefly takes on a hushed well-ordered atmosphere reminiscent of mealtime at a monastery. The ending of the table grace sung or chanted in unison is the signal that all may relax and the noise level soon begins to rise naturally. As children develop more maturity and experience, these periods of silence and order gradually become longer and more sophisticated. As we shall see in the discussion of behavior control in the first-grade classroom, adroit manipulation of these two radically different levels of control, and clear signalling of the level which is currently appropriate is a key to the maintenance of good classroom discipline.

The Japanese child graduates from preschool well socialized for entrance to first grade. In contrast to American Kindergarten and preschool education which places much more emphasis on academic preparedness in consonance with its styling of itself as the child's first "learning environment," Japanese children have usually acquired their not inconsiderable early reading and numeracy skills at home. However, as veterans of two to three years of "shudan seikatsu," they have developed the basic habits and abilities which allow them to function smoothly as members of a large group. Although they still maintain a dependent, well-indulged position within the family, in the public arena of the classroom all but the most problematic children have learned to modify their own desires and activities to fit those of the group and to respond to what is expected of them without overt exercise of teacher authority. Boisterous and enthusiastic, they also willingly and quickly respond to the teacher's calls to order, and perform basic classroom routines such as stowing belongings, lining up, or changing activities in an efficient, self-directed manner. They have learned to enjoy and take pride in the accomplishment of activities as a group, and as such have acquired in the Japanese view the basic prerequisites for first grade.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN THE JAPANESE FIRST GRADE

Beginning first grade marks the child's formal entrance into Japanese society. In contrast to preschool, which is a transition and preparation period still tinged with the indulgence and informality of the home, entering elementary school signals the "first big step into society," to quote a pamphl##udents requested to make the inspection. When the class performs this routine automatically the teacher can be reasonably sure that a long-term habit has been established.
officials are in order, along with a new wardrobe and extensive outfitting with academic supplies. The child moves from the world of home and mother, to become an individually responsible member of the peer group.

It is difficult for much more casual Americans to understand the degree of importance Japanese attach to this transition, although a parallel with high school commencement might be in order. After weeks of preparation and excitement, children undergo a solemn, formally conducted opening ceremony with parents and incoming students dressed in their most formal black attire. Long speeches from city and school board officials on the importance of the long road ahead, and ritual acceptance of the new first graders into the society of their older peers

complete probably the most solemn occasion the child has yet experienced in his life. The seriousness of the ceremony, the huge size of the new school, and the hundreds of strange children combine to ensure that the new students are shy, cautious, and anxious to please.

Japanese teachers capitalize immediately on this initial reaction, repeatedly flattering the students on their new-found identity as "big boys and girls (onīsan, onēsan) and explaining that a whole new type of more sophisticated behavior is now in order. "In elementary school, students do this..." "First graders line up like this...". Carefully explaining and demonstrating even the minutest details of what is expected, then having the class practice again and again, the teacher delightedly exclaims at their cleverness (minna san ha atama ga ii!), their skillfulness (jōzu des ne!) and their new sophistication(onīsan, onēsan mitai!). Scrupulously avoiding any type of negativity or individual chastisement, the teacher praises and encourages the class's gradually more sophisticated performance of basic daily routines. The children quickly gain confidence and come to view themselves as a "good class," taking pride in their efficiency and responsible performance.

To understand the Japanese approach to classroom discipline and management, it is important to realize that the issue is culturally conceptualized as not merely that of maintaining order, but rather as a process of character development. This

stems from a long Confucian tradition in which the primary g~ of education was spiritual maturity, which was achieved through a lengthy and arduous process of rigorous training under difficult circumstances (Rohlen, 1983; Dore, 1965). To this end, the development of persistence and self-discipline was a central but not altogether onerous task (Morsbach, 1983). Benedict (1946) has cogently observed that while Americans perceive the acquisition of discipline to involve a sacrifice of personal liberty imposed from external sources, Japanese conceptualize discipline as a refinement of personal sensibilities which increases an individual's ability to savor the higher things of life.

Self discipline is believed to be less a function of individual personality than it is a skill or habit which is acquired through practice. To this end, orderliness, regularity, cooperation, and respectfulness are not only emphasized but carefully trained in the form of clearly defined habits and routines. The ultimate goal of personal and spiritual integration of these qualities in one's life is assumed to ripen gradually through the patient acquisition and practice of smaller virtues, such as keeping a tidy desk, and enunciating "Good morning, teacher" in a properly respectful manner.

Moral and spiritual education has always assumed a central and formally recognized place in the Japanese public school curriculum. All grade levels receive a once weekly moral education course aimed at improving generalized appreciation for the

value of life, the importance of cooperation and friendship, etc. (Cummings, 1980; Rohlen, 1983). However, this course has very little influence on the actual establishment of discipline in the first grade classroom. Good discipline and sophisticated management routines have already been established by the third or fourth week of school, before the first lesson in the moral education course is presented. The most significant source of moral education in the Japanese school and the primary agent of the establishment of classroom discipline is the school routine itself. This is in keeping with the Japanese approach to spiritual education. Character development comes primarily through the acquistion of proper habits, with moral lectures and discussions assuming a secondary role.

The effectiveness of these attitudes and management techniques in establishing a smoothly-running classroom is striking. To better illustrate this point, let us visit a Japanese first-grade classroom during October, six months after the school year has started. An observer entering the school building in the morning before school starts would be surprised at the noise level and unrestrained activity of the children. While all faculty and staff are cloistered in the staff room for the daily ten to fifteen-minute meeting immediately prior to the starting of school, almost all children are already on the grounds or in the building. With no area of the building or grounds off limits to the children (except the staff room where

the meeting is in progress), and no adults elsewhere present, the entire student body has the unsupervised run of the school. Childish high spirits and a boisterous enthusiasm pervade the building as late arrivals quickly stow their school bags and prepare their materials for the first lesson before racing off to join their friends. Footraces in the delightfully echoing hallways, and almost-friendly tussle in the corner of a playground, and an experimental art project involving clapping the chalkboad erasers in interesting designs all over the board and the floor are in progress, while the more athletically minded children play on the trampoline and wall ladders in the gym.

As the first bell rings, activity patterns change, and children gravitate rapidly toward their classrooms, where they make a final check to be sure that their equipment and materials are ready for the first lesson. The more faint at heart may sit waiting at their desks, or gather to admire a friend's new handkerchief while the more robust use the opportunity to have a quick game of leapfrog over the chairs. The student monitors for the day (one boy and one girl rotated in order through the class) stand at the hallway door watching for the teacher to arrive after finishing the teacher's meeting. At the first sign of the teacher at the head of the hallway, the monitors sing out "Here comes the teacher!" and children scramble to stand at attention behind their desks. As the teacher crosses the threshold, the room falls into a friendly, expectant silence. As she reaches

the middle of the room, the teacher says "Good morning class" which is the signal for a loud and cheerfully chorused "Good morning teacher." The class sits down immediately as the monitors move to the front of the classroom. Enunciating carefully in unison, they recite "Today is Tuesday, October 5th. There are 43 students present. Ozawa Satoshi is absent."

At this point, all heads turn expectantly to the teacher, who usually makes a few brief, friendly remarks about the weather, inquires after students' health, or mentions activities scheduled for later in the day. Her remarks completed, she nods to the monitors who chorus "The first lesson will be arithmetic." This is a signal for the children to rise again, and for last minute stragglers to put their notebook or pencils on their desks. The monitors inspect the class's posture and desk tops with a jealous eye, and when all is ready to their satisfaction, they chorus "Sensei, onegaishimas"[7] then "rei" which is the signal for the entire class to bow to the teacher in unison. As children take their seats, the teacher moves to the front of the room and immediately begins the lesson.

Every desk top is identically arranged, arithmetic text book and notebook stacked in the upper left corner, a pencil and

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[7]This phrase literally rendered is "Teacher, we ask a favor." Repeated by the student at the beginning of almost every lesson situation in Japan, it means "please teach us," or more simply "we are ready to learn."

eraser horizontally placed at the top right. Hands in laps, eyes on the teacher, the day's lesson begins approximately two minutes after the teacher has entered the classroom in the morning. This high degree of efficiency and precision has been accomplished entirely without teacher reprimand or direction and is all the more striking in comparison to the chaos which prevailed only moments before.

To a Japanese, there is nothing particularly remarkable about this scene, yet to an American educator, there is much that evokes both admiration and discomfort. Basic cultural differences in underlying attitudes about the nature of children, the meaning of discipline, and the best way to achieve compliance create puzzling paradoxes to the Western eye.

In contrast to their American counterparts, Japanese teachers genuinely believe children to be basically responsible, well-intentioned, and capable of self-supervision. Once properly instructed regarding dangerous activities to be avoided, children of elementary school age are believed to be able to be safely left to their own devices. Children should properly be accorded trust and the chance to learn to regulate their own behavior. Constant supervision by adults is believed to prevent the development of proper self-monitoring and spoil the atmosphere of mutual trust between the student and the teacher. As Lewis has noted (1984) this approach may promote internalization of school rules as children gradually experience first-hand the natural

consequences of disregarding them, rather than assuming that their enforcement is the perogative of adult authority.

As described earlier, Japanese teachers are also completely comfortable with the signs of childish exuberance which frequently cause irritation to American adults. Shouting, running, jumping, and playing pranks are perfectly appropriate and even positively regarded as long as the class is not actively in session. The unrestrained activity exhibited immediately before school starts is unhesitatingly resumed during recess in the presence of the teacher, or even during a lull in the arithmetic lesson while the teacher helps the slower students finish their seat work. Teachers regard this with an indulgent eye, and do not appear to view the noise and boisterous movement as a threat to their control or position of authority. Even the monitor's daily hallway vigil is less to spare their rowdy classmates from chastisement upon the teacher's arrival than it is to signal the class to prepare a proper welcome for the teacher.

Brief glimpses of the structured periods of Japanese school life and the military-like style of some classroom routines leads Americans to mistakenly assume that Japanese teachers are authoritarian taskmasters. However, as we have seen in the case of preschools, in general they eschew the demonstration of overt control. As children graduate from preschool to first grade, this tendency becomes more pronounced and teachers place increased emphasis on peer sanctions and group control. Students

are encouraged to take responsibility for guiding and correcting each other and to solve minor fights and difficulties by themselves.

Two aspects of the organization of Japanese classrooms facilitate this peer-based approach. One is the system of seating students in double rows, and the other is the formation of small work groups or han. In virtually every Japanese classroom visited, students are seated in boy-girl pairs, with each pair's desks arranged so as to be touching. Each student is responsible for his or her deskmate, and students are encouraged to correct and assist each other whenever possible. The usually rowdier little boys are alternately scolded and mothered by the little girls with that mixture of disgust and affection which characterizes boy-girl relationships in the early elementary grades.

All Japanese classrooms are organized into a number of mixed-ability work groups or han composed of the 6 to 8 students who share adjoining desks. Han are used extensively for a variety of activities including accomplishing academic assignments, service-oriented activities such as cleaning the classroom, and discipline and behavior control. In dealing with misbehavior and classroom problems, teachers generally prefer to deal either with han or the class as a whole, rather than singling out the individuals directly involved. For example, rather than reminding an inattentive or slow-moving child to get

ready for lunch, a teacher will typically observe "The lion group doesn't seem to be ready yet." Frowns and urgent nudges from his han-mates ensure that the child quickly makes ready so as not to incur the further disapproval of his friends.

Probably the single most important method of achieving a smoothly-managed classroom is training in classroom routines. Japanese consider this of such fundamental importance to the initiation of students into elementary school life that in all schools visited, the first five to ten classroom days were devoted almost exclusively to the training and practice of these routines. After that, academic activities were introduced gradually and it was only after the first four to six weeks had elasped that the students assumed a full academic schedule and were judged to have achieved competence in the necessary daily rituals.

This training begins on an extremely basic level. For example, on the first day of class, students learn how to place their outdoor shoes correctly in the outdoor shoe cupboard, an activity which children have aleady been performing at home and in preschool each day for three or four years. This time, however, the routine becomes much more sophisticated. With the students seated attentively in a circle on the floor, the teacher explains that the whole class's shoe cupboard looks much nicer if each pair faces the same way, and how important it is to have the shoes placed nicely side by side. The class discusses which

placements are correct and incorrect, and then all students remove their shoes and replace them correctly. With great seriousness, the teacher then inspects carefully, inviting comments and asking students to make small adjustments here and there. The importance of performing this routine task each day in a "chan to shita" (just right) manner is emphasized repeatedly.

Students then exchange indoor shoes for outdoor ones[8] and together inspect their arrangement in the cupboard. With considerable praise and admiration for the speed and care with which students have learned this first important "obenkyo" (lesson), a brief romp on the playground ensues. Upon returning to the building, the class carefully analyzes their arrangement of the shoes again, with the teacher noting that this time everything was arranged in a chan to fashion the first time. Each time the class changes shoes over the next several days special care will be taken, with different students requested to make the inspection. When the class performs this routine automatically the teacher can be reasonably sure that a long-term habit has bee established.

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[8]All Japanese schools require that children wear identical indoor shoes in the building and on walkways, and outdoor shoes on the playground and to and from school.

Similarly, students study and carefully practice how to sit properly in their chairs (feet flat, hands on knees, eyes to the front), how to arise from the chair (from the right side so as not to bump one's seatmate), how to stand at attention and bow (the entire class inclining at an identical angle). Over a period of several days, the class repeatedly practices moving smoothly on cue in unison from sitting to standing at attention, to bowing and sitting down again. When the class can accomplish this with the precision of a drill team, the cuing is delegated to the daily student monitor, and a routine which will remain with the child throughout his school life has been established. Throughout this training the importance of accomplishing these routines in a chan to or kicchin to (precise, just right) manner is emphasized. Sloppiness is discouraged by encouraging students to inspect their class's performance with a careful eye, and precision is generally praised. Conscientious, careful performance of even minor daily activities is an important method of moral and character training in the Japanese tradition.

In this manner, students also learn how to assemble certain standard materials on their desk top at the beginning of each class, how to line up in various orders, how to dust and mop the classroom, and numerous other daily routines which are later performed almost as unconscious habits under the cuing of monitors. In a matter of weeks, the classroom gradually becomes largely student-managed, and the teacher's role begins to

resemble that of an invited specialist whose primary job is to teach.

Far from seeing this training as tedious, Japanese teachers believe that this is an important means for children to get to know each other, and that they enjoy becoming able to function as part of a well-oiled group. Learning to speak so that the class's voices blend in a cheerful, well-modulated chorus, and learning to form and move about naturally in straight, equidistant lines is believed to develop nakama ishiki, or consciousness of oneself as a member of a group. In the Japanese mind, this transforms the classroom from a collection of isolated, lonely individuals into a cheerful, friendly group.

In addition to their short-term purpose of promoting nakama ishiki and welding the class into a well-organized unit, Japanese teachers place considerable emphasis on the importance of this period in establishing basic classroom attitudes and routines which will follow the student throughout his educational life. The successfulness with which this training is accomplished will be visible for at least the next six years as the class moves as a unit through the elementary school. Failure to establish well-trained, efficient routines in such a manner that students execute them automatically in a cheerful-self disciplined way is believed to create bad habits and attitudes which are extremely difficult to reform. For this reason, Japanese administrators prefer to assign the most experienced and talented teachers to

the first grade[9]. An experienced teacher can establish a properly solid foundation during the first few weeks of school and create an environment in which good behavior and efficient classroom management will continue to occur almost as a matter of course.

CONTINUITY WITH LATER SCHOOLING

The habits of discipline and classroom management established during the preschool and early elementary years have a long-term impact on later schooling. The routines of coming to order, dismissal, lining up, preparation of materials, and transitions between activities are maintained virtually without variation by successive teachers throughout elementary school (Cummings, 1980). These routines remain as basic learning habits during junior high and high school. Although high school teachers rarely concern themselves with the details of students' performance of these basic routines, they have become a firmly engrained part of going to school. Indeed, habits such as preparing all necessary materials on one's desktop before the lesson begins and rising to bow at the beginning of class will

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[9]Japanese elmentary school teachers are assigned by principals and superintendents to the school and grade level they will teach. Teachers teach a different grade level each year, although they frequently remain with the same class for two years. In this way, teachers acquire experience with all grade levels, although only the better teachers are assigned to first grade.

remain with the students in diverse learning situations throughout the rest of their lives. Rohlen (1983) reports the continuity of these habits in his study of Kobe high schools, along with the students' general orderliness, good conduct, and careful, intelligent work habits. In all but the most poorly-ranked high schools discipline is almost a non-existent issue, as students listen or doze quietly through long, uninspiring lectures. The high level of order in the absence of overt authority, and the absence of teacher concern with "controlling" the students is more reminiscent of a university lecture hall than of adolescent education in America.

A more subtle effect of the careful early training in daily routines and work habits is the development of a more reflective approach to learning tasks. Salkind, Kojima and Zelniker (1978) found that Japanese children made fewer errors on tests of response style, such as Matching Familiar Figures, than did American or Israeli children at ages five and nine before the scores reached a ceiling effect at age ten. Although their response time at age five was the slowest of all three cultures, by age ten Japanese children responded the fastest. This reflects the effect of parents' and teachers' initially careful, precise approach which gains speed as children develop facility and confidence. Kojima (1985) has also observed that Japanese children are more analytical and field-independent in preceptual tasks than their American counterparts.

Kojima (1985) and Nagano (1983) have suggested that these differences are the reflection of broader cultural methods of childrearing and early education which reward patient, conscientious efforts to solve even laborious and uninteresting adult-imposed tasks. Student diligence and relative docility is an important ingredient of educational success in any country, but particularly in Japan where post-elementary education requires the memorization of large quantities of straight-forwardly prescribed facts. An important early influence in the development of this careful, diligent approach to learning is the strong emphasis on orderly habits and precise execution of routines begun in preschool and elementary school.

Far from rebelling at these high expectations and carefully routinized learning environments, the vast majority of Japanese students accept them as a matter of course, or more accurately as perfectly justifiable and even morally appropriate. Courtesy to teachers, responsibility to the classroom group, self-motivated and conscientious personal habits, and diligence in executing assignments and tasks are if not the highest embodiment of moral virtue, at least an important indication of good personality and character. The result of teachers' careful avoidance of overt methods of behavior control and direct confrontation with individual students is that children unconsciously internalize the school's values and behavioral standards. A well-disciplined generation of future citizens has been achieved.

LESSONS for the AMERICAN CLASSROOM

From an American point of view, there is much that we can find to admire in the Japanese system of classroom management and behavior control. The admirable levels of order and self discipline achieved with an absence of harsh authoritarianism allow for great efficiency in the use of classroom teaching time and an atmosphere devoted to serious study. Such an environment may seem a dream come true to many beleaguered American educators.

Yet some aspects of the Japanese model seem a bit disturbing to us. Might not the emphasis on precise, uniform execution of routines be carried just a little bit too far? Might not the role of the peer group in overseeing and correcting misbehavior be just a little bit too strong? Might not student docility encourage unquestioning acceptance of the status quo and the training in morality Japanese believe that their system provides mask an unwillingness to accept alternative life styles and value systems? Admiration is thus tinged with ambivalence. Order carried to an extreme becomes uninspired uniformity, and internalization of school standards and values becomes uncritical acquiescence. The difficulty is in finding an appropriate balance between the two extremes.

For deeply-rooted cultural reasons, Japanese and Americans set this balance at different points. It is unlikely that a brief acquaintance with Japanese education can or should change

Americans' basic value judgements. Yet despite basic cultural differences, there may be some useful ideas and techniques which can be gleaned.

Most importantly, the Japanese example demonstrates that orderly, self-disciplined classroom conduct is not solely the product of a child's basic personality or an exceptional home environment. Under the Japanese approach, good classroom behavior is a skill which can be taught through concrete easily replicable training methods. As we have seen, Japanese preschool and first-grade teachers regularly accomplish the feat of turning large classes of highly indulged, boisterous children into a well-organized highly-disciplined unit. This certainly is a cause for American teachers to take heart.

To this end, American teachers must provide more explicit training in classroom routines such as coming to order and dismissal, making transitions between activities, and preparing books, pencils and other learning materials. The initial tedium and extra time invested in establishing these routines later pays off many times over in savings of time and teacher and student frustration. Inadequately trained and loosely managed classes are an ordeal for students as well as teachers in any culture.

In addition, much more authority for leading classroom activities can be delegated to even very young students. Once routines have become well established, even relatively quiet and unforthcoming students can take charge on a rotating basis. The

experience of regularly having the responsibility of leading the group gives quieter children more confidence and rowdier children sympathy for the situation of a leader faced with uncooperative followers. For all students this opportunity encourages mutual cooperation and internalization of classroom values.

Finally, American students may take more seriously the task of becoming a disciplined, well-motivated first grader if mor## they are entering a very important and awesome new life. This puts them on their best behavior with a strong desire to learn to perform appropriately in their new environment. This approach could help American children to more willingly internalize school values.

The example of Japanese education is a provocative one. Classroom management and discipline are particularly interesting issues because they reflect the very different cultural assumptions which underlie the educational process. Although in many ways the assumptions and values of Japanese culture are not ours, there is a great deal which we can learn from their approach. If cross-cultural encounters with the Japanese way of doing things encourages American educators and parents to re-examine their unconscious assumptions and suggests some practical techniques which

may be of use in American classrooms, a valuable and far-reaching lesson will have been learned.

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